



Foreign Agricultural Service

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## **Canada**

### **Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and**

### **Standards**

### **New Enforcement Policies for Sulphite Residues on**

### **Fruits & Vegetables**

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#### **Report Highlights:**

Recent violations of sulphite residues on lychees and longans imported into Canada has prompted the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to adopt new Enforcement Policies for sulphurous acid and its salts added to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Ottawa [CA1], CA

Canada's Food And Drug Regulations prohibit the addition of sulphites to fresh fruits and vegetables. In early August 2000, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced it has developed two Enforcement Policies for sulphurous acid and its salts added to fresh fruits and vegetables. The action is precipitated by recent violations of sulphite residues on lychees and longans imported into Canada. No Food and Drug Regulation violations have been reported among imports of these fruits from the United States (grown mostly in Florida & Hawaii).

With the exception of fresh grapes, the Enforcement Policies are applicable to all fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh mushrooms and fresh minimally processed ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables that are consumed raw or that are destined to be further processed. The term "sulphurous acid and its salts" includes, with some exceptions, all sulfites. However, sulphurous acid and its salts do not include sulphate and pure sulphur.

#### Legislative Authority

Section B.11.001.1 of the Food and Drug Regulations states:

"No person shall sell any fresh fruit or vegetable that is intended to be consumed raw, except grapes, if sulphurous acid or any salt thereof has been added thereto."

#### Enforcement Policy for Fresh Fruits & Vegetables that are Intended to be Consumed Raw:

When residues of sulphurous acid or any of its salts are found on fresh fruits and vegetables, an infraction letter will be sent to the principal parties (i.e., marketer, wholesaler, processor, exporter, and/or Embassy of the shipping country).

When the sulphite residue found on fresh fruits and vegetables is less than 10 parts per million (ppm), CFIA inspectors will consult Area or National Technical Specialists to determine human health risks.

However, when the sulphite residue found on fresh fruits and vegetables is 10 parts per million (ppm) or more, a recall action (including a public alert) will be initiated. As a follow-up action, CFIA inspectors will take a minimum of five samples of product to ensure its compliance with the Food & Drug Regulations.

Sulphite residue found on the shell of lychees and longans but not found in the flesh of the fruit is still considered a violation of the Food & Drug Regulations and the enforcement policy described above will be applicable.

When a lot of grapes has been tested and found to contain sulphites in excess of 10 ppm, CFIA inspectors will consult Area or National Technical Specialists to determine human health risks, even though the Food & Drug Regulations permit the use of sulphurous acid or any of its salts on grapes.

Enforcement Policy for Fresh Fruits & Vegetables That Are Not Intended to be Consumed Raw:

A) Labeling Enforcement: All packages of fresh fruits and vegetables that are not intended to be consumed raw shall be labeled in such a fashion that indicates sulphite has been added to the packed fruit or vegetable. It would be advisable for the manufacturer to indicate on the label of such products that they are intended for further processing.

B) Residue Enforcement: When fresh fruits and vegetables have been found in excess of the allowable tolerance for sulphurous acid or any of its salts, CFIA inspectors will consult Area or National Technical Specialists to determine the potential human health risks and recall actions. As a follow-up action, CFIA inspectors will take a minimum of five samples of product to ensure its compliance with the Food & Drug Regulations.

Requests for further information and technical inquiries should be directed to:

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